6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

"Immediately the day dawns the heads of the families give to almost all the junior members and servants of the household and to wives and children, money-presents varying from 4 as. to a rupee or two. Children preserve these presents to serve as their pocket money. In the more numerically large families similar presents are also made by the heads of particular branches of the same family to their juniors, children, wives and servants. These presents are intended to be the forerunners of incomes to them more splendid all the year round.

"But one other item connected with the festival deserves mention. On the evening of the previous day, about four or five o'clock most well-to-do families distribute paddy or rice, as the case may be, in varying quantities with some other accessories to the family-workmen, whether they live on the family-estates or not. In return for this, these labourers bring with them for presentation the fruits of their own labours such as vegetables of divers sorts, cocoanut oil, jaggery, plantains, pumpkins, cucumbers, brinjals, &c., in ways such as their respective circumstances might permit.

"With the close of the noon-meal the festival practically concludes, and nothing remains of it for the next day or for the same evening, for that matter. In some families after the noon-meals are over, dancing and games of various kinds are carried on, which contribute to the enhancement of the pleasantries incidental to the festival. As on other prominent occasions, card-playing and other games are also resorted to."

"THE THIRUVATHÎRA FESTIVAL.

"Thiruvathira is one of the three great national occasions of Malabar. It generally comes off in the Malayalam month of Dhanu (December or January) on the day called the Thiruvathira day. It is essentially a festival in which females are almost exclusively concerned and lasts for but a single day. The popular conception of it is that it is in commemoration of the death of Kamadevan, the Cupid of our national mythology. As recorded in the old Puranas, Kamadevan was destroyed in the burning fire of the third eye of Siva, one of the chief members of our Divine Trinity. Hence he is now supposed as having only an ideal or rather spiritual existence, and thus he exerts a powerful influence upon the lower passions of human nature. The memory of this unhappy tragedy is still kept alive amongst us, particularly the female section, by means of the annual celebration of this important festival. About a week before the day, the festival practically opens. At about 4 in the morning every young female member of Nair families with pretensions to decency, gets out of her bed and takes her bath in a tank. Usually, a fairly large number of these young ladies collect themselves in

776 during that night for fear of calumny. There, the men
821 do not care much. We will now bid adieu to Mr. Gopal
[184] Pannikar, but not without thanking him for all he has told us about his own people.

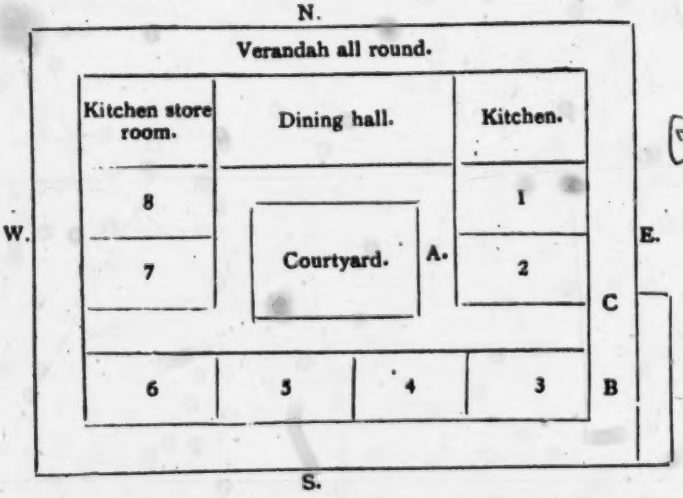
241 Uchâl (Uchaval) is the term used for the first three days of the Malayalam month Makaram, usually falling between the 15th and 20th January. All over Malabar,
[243] with the exception of Wynâd, above the ghâts, there are two crops of rice every year, one with the south-west, one
[132] with the north-east monsoon. Elsewhere in Southern India rice land is always irrigated, but in Malabar there
[776] is no such thing, practically, as irrigation, the heavy rainfall rendering it unnecessary, and the earth goddess—Bhûmi Dêvi—brings forth her fruit under the stimulus of the rain from heaven. She produces the crops as a female produces her children, and from the 1st of the month Makaram, she rests until the cultivator again begins to disturb her, three months later, when the showers preceding the south-west monsoon fall. Uchâl is the period of three days when the earth goddess menstruates. Granaries and all receptacles of grain are closed during Uchâl—they are not even visited. Paddy is not sold. No implement of cultivation is touched. The rice to be used during the three days is pounded out beforehand and kept separate. But it is no season of gloom;
241 rather is it one of festivity. As particular forms of food
252 partaken on specific occasions have an interest of their
262 own, we must not omit description of the Uchâl cake—the Pâla Ata. (Pâla—spathe of the areca-palm, Ata—cake). A paste is made of rice flour and water and spread thickly (about an inch thick) on one side of two pieces of the spathe of the areca-palm, each piece being from 2 to 3 feet in length and about 8 inches wide. Powdered jaggery, scraped cocoanut, powdered ginger, a little garlic and other condiments, are then put in small quantities on the paste. The two pieces of the spathe are then placed together, and they are stitched all round the edges. The whole is covered over with soft red mud and put into a fire where it is kept until the mud covering cracks. The cake is then cooked and ready for eating. It is cut and distributed to members of the family and friends.

564 In parts of Malabar the Tîyan tenants present these
262 cakes to their Nâyar landlords as a token of allegiance
466 or submission. Rice is the only article of food which if
241 prepared by a Tîyan the Nâyar cannot eat; so the Nâyar has no caste scruples about eating the Pâla Ata prepared

564
for him by the Tîyan at Uchâl. I recollect a case of 262
murder which arose out of nothing more or less than a 466
Tîyan tenant's refusal to present his Nâyar landlord with 241
a Pâla Ata at Uchâl. I once tried to preserve one of these cakes, but the results were too disastrous for description.*

HABITATIONS.

A house may face east or west; never north or south. 342
As a rule the Nâyar's house faces the east. Every [351]
garden is enclosed by a bank, a hedge, or a fencing of some kind, and entrance is to be made at one point only, the east, where there is a gate-house, or, as in the case of of the poorest houses a small portico, or open doorway roofed over. One never walks straight through this; there is always a kind of stile to surmount. It is the same everywhere in Malabar, and not only amongst the Nâyars. The following is a plan of a nâlupura or four- 342
sided house, which may be taken as representative of the 556
houses of the rich:



[778]

Numbers 6 and 7 are rooms which are used generally for storing grain.

At A is a staircase leading to the room of the upper story occupied by the female members of the family. At B is a staircase to the rooms of the upper story

*For much of the information regarding Uchâl I am indebted to Mr. M. Raman Menon. [115]

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWll Kerala AWll

as ginger and chillies, palm sugar, mangoes and bananas, betel leaf, tea and coffee. There are two main paddy (unhusked rice) harvests, the *kanni* in September and until November, depending on the type of rice planted and where, and the *magaram* in January and February.

A system of land-tenure and tenancy very special to Kerala is in existence in the state and its principal characteristics may be summed up as follows. Freehold land owners are called *janmis* and they are entitled to the absolute proprietorship of the land; they may mortgage or lease it to anyone as they wish. They are themselves nearly always non-cultivating. The first kind of tenure to which they may resort is called *kanam* and he who holds the lease is known as the *kanamdar*. This is a curious type of arrangement between landlord and tenant, by which the latter deposits a certain sum with the *janmi*, who in return pays interest on the amount as if it were a loan. The *kanamdar* then has the right to work the land or to lease it out to someone else. Every year he pays rent, an adjusted sum as the interest received from the landlord is deducted. Once every twelve years, a so-called renewal fee is paid by the tenant equal to three times the annual rent, and this gives him the right of possession for a further twelve years. Should he wish to give up the lease, the original deposit will be returned to him by the *janmi*. Most *kanamdars* sub-let and do not cultivate the land themselves.

The *kanamdars* often lease out the land as a *kanam* tenure too; but if they do not, it is as a *verumpattam* lease that they do so. This is a simple affair held for one year at a time, by which the tenant pays a fixed rent, or for several years, in which case it is called a customary *verumpattam*, and a renewal fee then becomes necessary, payable between five and twelve years. This lease is used only for paddy fields. Tenants of this category often sub-lease in the same way to others, who cultivate the land either themselves, or, more usually, employ labourers to do so. These labourers are of two kinds, free and tied. The former are coolies hiring themselves out for wages, while the others are agrarian farmhands who receive only board, lodging and clothing from the master responsible for them.

Customary *verumpattam* tenure of palm gardens for the production of coconuts or arecanuts is called *kuzhikanam*. The twelve year renewal fee is equal to the amount made on the garden in the last year and a half of the lease. Virgin and waste land, which nevertheless always has a *janmi* somewhere, is also let out on this type of tenure. The land owner has the right to evict the tenant if he has made no improvement of the land during his period of lease. House-sites occupied by tenants

31: Slater S-5 (1916-1917) 1918 AWI India

435 Site values of land for building are getting higher and higher in the 'town', chiefly because the Shoranur-Cochin Railway now runs through this place, the principal offices of the taluk are here, and a high school has just been opened. Rs. 500 per acre may be paid in the 'town'; Rs. 50 to Rs. 100 in the rest of the village area. But the best wet land fetches up to Rs. 1,500 per acre. Cultivable land fetches far higher prices than building land, because only land unfit for cultivation, of which there is enough, is used for building.

423 The practice of exchanging lands is unknown. Generally, though not always, holdings are continuous. Field huts, built in [343] the midst of their fields, are often used by big farmers. The seeds, the harvested paddy and other crops, the stock, the implements, etc., are kept there.

296 *Subsidiary industries.*—Weaving is not practised. In the north-eastern part of the State, however, handloom weaving of an exquisite sort and also of a rough character is practised.

285 Mat-weaving of an exquisite pattern out of certain reeds duly coloured is practised by a set of people locally known as 'Koravas.'
735 The condition of these men, however, is miserable. They have no capital, no organization or culture, but usually make their wares to order, though now and then a few enterprising middlemen avail [787] themselves of these people's skill. They talk a jargon of Tamil [791] and Malayalam, and their females, like gipsies, beg from house to house and profess themselves to be adepts in palmistry. They make mats costing from Re. 1 to Rs. 15 or Rs. 20. They yet live from hand to mouth; and I have my doubts whether they will be able to keep up their skill unless knowing people help to raise their economic condition.

564 Every village moreover contains within its borders the following castes who follow their hereditary crafts:—the Marasari (carpenter), Kallasari (mason), Tattan (goldsmith), Musari (brazier), Kollan (blacksmith), and Tolkollan (leather-worker). There are a few families of each of these castes in Watakanchery also. "As their services are much in requisition and as they earn better wages than unskilled labourers, they are still engaged in their hereditary occupation. The first five groups are socially in a par with each other. They all interdine, but do not intermarry. But the Tolkollans are considered inferior in status to the rest and cannot touch them without causing pollution, probably on account of their [595] work in leather which in its raw state is considered impure. Polyandry of the fraternal type was prevalent among them, several brothers marrying one wife and the children being treated as common to all. This practice however is fast dying out, if it has [783] not already done so." (Census Reports.) One special feature in the caste-hierarchy is that these people are made to stand at a specified distance while approaching the higher castes (24 feet is the rule).

•466 These castes minister to the every day needs of the community, executing their work generally to order. As they are very poor, they cannot afford to work on their own account on a commercial
326 scale. The village usually contains a recognized *desa-asari* (village smith) to whom the farmers pay a certain amount of paddy at the harvesting season of the year for the repair of their implements. None but the village-smith is entitled to this dole. These may entertain apprentices from their own caste-people, though the

31: Slater S-5 (1916-1917) 1918 AWI India
Kerala AWII

Labour cost of cultivation of one acre of paddy.

For this area 8½ paras * of seed will be used.

Nature of work.	Rate of wages.	Total number of days.	Total amount of wages.	In kind or money.	Remarks.
			RS. A.		
Ploughing ...	3 as. or 3 ed. of paddy per half-day.	25	4 12	Both customery.	The ploughman works only during the first half of the day. He is expected to plough three times over an area of one para of seed capacity in a half day; and the land requires nine ploughings.
Plucking for replanting.	5 as. or 5 ed. of paddy per day (piece-wages).	8	2 8	Do.	Women chiefly employed. One person plucks one para-seed-area per day and is paid 5 ed. of paddy.
Replanting.	Earns 5 as. or 5 ed. of paddy per day (piece-wages).	4	1 4	Do.	Half the labour of plucking.
Weeding ...	4 as. or 4 ed. of paddy per para.		2 2	Do.	Only when transplantation does not take place.
Water-inspection.	4 as. per day ...	for 3 months.	1 13	Do.	One person can supervise 12½ acres.
Safe-keeping of matured paddy.	4 paras of paddy (Rs. 2) for 15 days.	15 to 20	2 0	Do.	At the period of harvest he is paid in kind.
Harvesting (including mowing, thrashing, etc.).	For every six paras of paddy gathered one para is paid.				Women chiefly engaged.

Note.—The yield per para is 10 to 20 fold †; and in specially favoured lands even more. In this table the price of 1 *edangali* of paddy is taken to be 1 anna (which was the market rate 1916-1917).

Statement showing the prices of staple food-grains in the Cochin State for the year 1915-6.

Articles.	Prices per maund of 82⅔ lb.	
	1914-5.	1915-6.
	RS. A. P.	RS. A. P.
Rice (husked)	6 8 11	6 5 10
Wheat	5 14 1	5 15 11
Peas	5 10 6	5 12 1
Dholl	6 8 11	7 5 2
Gram	3 8 0	3 10 7
Gingelly	9 9 7	8 6 1
Green peas	3 5 11	5 7 5
Bengal gram	5 15 2	5 15 9

* [Approximately 180 lb., an excessive quantity. "Transplanted, 20 lb. in 7 cents of land will plant up one acre. But this seed-rate is usually very largely exceeded, up to 150 lb. per acre being used" Wood, Notebook of Agricultural Facts, p. 52.—Ed.]

† [I.e., 16 to 32 cwt. per acre, worth about Rs. 50 to 100. With the lower yield the net return is Rs. 31 per acre, with the higher Rs. 75, from which cost of seed must be subtracted. —Ed.]